

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

Claim 1. (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for impounding escrow funds by an electronic funds processor (EFP) in a computer system from credit/debit card transactions of a merchant associated with a close-out period, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a first sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more non-credit/debit card transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a second sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more credit/debit card transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a first escrow amount in the computer system based on the first sales amount, wherein the first escrow amount is determined as one of:

(1) a predetermined percentage of one or more of the first and second sales amounts, and

(2) a sum of a predetermined percentage of at least one of the first and second sales amounts,

and wherein said predetermined percentage comprising one of

(1) a merchant tax rate, and

(2) an estimate for generating escrow funds sufficient to pay a predetermined sum from the one or more of the first and second sales amounts over a predetermined number of sales periods;

determining in the computer system whether the second sales amount exceeds the first escrow amount; and

crediting a second escrow account with the first escrow amount when the second sales amount exceeds the first escrow amount; ~~crediting a second escrow account with the first escrow amount;~~ and

crediting a merchant account with an amount equal to the difference between the second sales amount and the first escrow amount.

Claim 2. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the one or more non-credit/debit card transactions are cash transactions.

Claim 3. (original): The method of claim 1, wherein one or more non-credit/debit card transactions are each facilitated using a payment instrument selected from the group consisting of personal checks, money orders, bank checks, travelers checks, gift checks, gift certificates, and cash.

Claim 4. (currently amended): The method of claim 1, comprising the additional steps of:

determining a payable amount to be paid from the first escrow account; and  
debiting the payable amount from the first escrow account.

Claim 5. (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for impounding escrow funds by an electronic funds processor (EFP) in a computer system from credit/debit card transactions of a merchant associated with a close-out period, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a first sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more taxable non-credit/debit card transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a second sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more taxable credit/debit card transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a first escrow amount in the computer system based on the sum of the first and second sales amounts, wherein the first escrow amount is determined as one of:

(1) a predetermined percentage of one or more of the first and second sales amounts, and

(2) a sum of a predetermined percentage of at least one of the first and second sales amounts,

and wherein said predetermined percentage comprising one of

(1) a merchant tax rate, and

(2) an estimate for generating escrow funds sufficient to pay a predetermined sum from the one or more of the first and second sales amounts over a predetermined number of sales periods;

determining whether a third sales amount exceeds the first escrow amount; and

crediting a second escrow account with the first escrow amount when the third sales amount exceeds the first escrow amount; and, ~~crediting a second escrow account with the first escrow amount, and~~

crediting a merchant account with an amount equal to the difference between the third sales amount and the first escrow amount.

Claim 6. (original): The method of claim 5, wherein the third sales amount is equal to the second sales amount.

Claim 7. (original): The method of claim 5, wherein the third sales amount is equal to the sum of the second sales amount and a fourth sales amount associated with one or more non-taxable credit/debit card transactions of the merchant associated with the closeout period.

Claim 8. (currently amended): The method of claim 5, comprising the additional steps of: determining a payable amount to be paid from the first escrow account; and debiting the payable amount from the escrow account.

Claim 9. (original): The method of claim 8, wherein the payable amount is debited for payment to one or more of a local tax authority, a state tax authority, a federal tax authority, a judicial authority, a recipient of a legal judgment and a merchant.

Claims 10-12. (canceled).

Claim 13. (currently amended): The method of claim ~~425~~, wherein the predetermined percentage is increased over the merchant tax rate in order to facilitate payment of back taxes.

Claim 14. (canceled)

Claim 15. (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for impounding escrow funds by an electronic funds processor (EFP) in a computer system from sales transactions of a merchant associated with a close-out period, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a first sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more sales transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a second sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more credit/debit card transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a first escrow amount in the computer system based on the first sales amount, wherein the first escrow amount is determined as one of:

(1) a predetermined percentage of one or more of the first and second sales amounts, and

(2) a sum of a predetermined percentage of at least one of the first and second sales amounts.

and wherein said predetermined percentage comprising one of

(1) a merchant tax rate, and

(2) an estimate for generating escrow funds sufficient to pay a predetermined sum from the one or more of the first and second sales amounts over a predetermined number of sales periods;

determining whether the second sales amount in the computer system exceeds the first escrow amount; ~~and~~

crediting a second escrow account with the first escrow amount when the second sales amount exceeds the first escrow amount; ~~crediting a second escrow account with the first escrow amount; and~~

crediting a merchant account with an amount equal to the difference between the second sales amount and the first escrow amount.

Claim 16. (currently amended): A computer-implemented method for impounding escrow funds by an electronic funds processor (EFP) in a computer system from sales transactions of a merchant associated with a close-out period, the method comprising the steps of:

determining a first sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more sales transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a second sales amount in the computer system associated with one or more credit/debit card transactions of the merchant during the closeout period;

determining a plurality of escrow amounts based on the first sales amount, wherein each of the plurality of escrow amounts are determined as one of:

(1) a predetermined percentage of one or more of the first and second sales amounts, and

(2) a sum of a predetermined percentage of at least one of the first and second sales amounts.

and wherein said predetermined percentage comprising one of

(1) a merchant tax rate, and

(2) an estimate for generating escrow funds sufficient to pay a predetermined sum from the one or more of the first and second sales amounts over a predetermined number of sales periods;

determining in the computer system whether the second sales amount exceeds the sum of the plurality of escrow amounts; and

crediting one of a plurality of escrow accounts with each of the plurality of escrow amounts when the second sales amount exceeds the sum of the plurality of escrow amounts; ~~crediting one of a plurality of escrow accounts with each of the plurality of escrow amounts, and~~

crediting a merchant account with an amount equal to the difference between the second sales amount and the sum of the plurality of escrow amounts.